Beyond the Classroom Study: Reflection

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Listening and reading articles about failing education in Chicago by its political machine and the media, along with drastic policies being put forward and constant slander on the teaching profession, this study is was sorely needed. This is a study that actually analyzes what teachers do, how they spend there time, and other statistics that outline what goes on in the schools, I believe is a step forward in educating the public and politicians about teachers, the people on the frontlines of education with a direct connection to the student population and which have the largest effect on learning. According to the study, with an 8 hour and 53 minute on average work day broken up into 5 hours and 38 minutes of teaching related activities and 3 hours and 3 minutes of non-teaching related activities, these could be important statistics to look at when considering what will improve student learning. Over 3 hours of non-teaching related activities for a teacher is excessive. Of the teaching related activities, actual instruction takes place only 3 hours and 23 minutes for the high school mean, with 45 minutes for assessing student work and another 20 for giving curriculum assessments, that’s over an hour of assessment taken away from instruction everyday. Assessment is indeed important in the instructional process in informing the teacher the progression of the students and how to adapt and plan lessons in the future, this too seems excessive, and seems to only be getting worse with the continuing emphasis on standardized testing.

This study also states that it did not include high stakes test prepping and administering into the standard school day, which if they had done so would have reduced instructional time by another hour from around 4 hours down to 3, (page 14). When you add up all the hours of excessive assessment and test prepping for the core subjects over the course of just one school year, a massive amount of time has been spent that could have been used for learning and moving forward in subject material. These statistics show places where changes can be made to increase instructional time, instead of merely extending the school day.

Another statistic that stood out was the amount of time “210 weekly minutes sorting data” to 45 minutes a week collaborating with other teachers. The common core standards and other initiatives designed to promote teacher collaboration I believe are steps in the right direction, but with these initiatives comes with it increasing reliance on data collection and analysis, which adds excessive amounts of time to a teachers day, time that could be spent in regards to instructional matters. The study indicates an average of 2 hours of work after school is over, and 3 hours and 45 minutes during weekends showing teachers are already working well outside the hours required of them, while politicians slash pensions, benefits, and salary increases and pay scales in general. The teaching profession breeds passion in its members, working off the clock because they believe in the ideology and sociological impact of the work. When you take away the means to support oneself financially to the point of teachers having to work multiple jobs to thrive and have a family of there own, your cutting down the profession to a menial hourly job where workers clock and in and out for a paycheck and that’s it. The teaching profession is slowly turning into this concept as politicians use education as an issue to further their political game and rhetoric. This study outlines the extra work teachers put into their profession, and also highlights the time management currently in place, which I believe if tweaked could have a significant impact on student learning.